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for others. The wish to show a long list of contributors has led to the admission of some pieces, the absence of which would improve the character of the volume as a whole. Some of the verses show more patriotism than poetry, and some prose articles display more good feeling than literary taste. The intellectual wealth of the State would appear to more advantage in copious extracts from a few writers, than in a heap of scraps from a multitude. And there was no want of materials of the highest merit. New Hampshire has given birth to many individuals, whose reputation is identified with that of the whole country ; though many of them, as the editors remark in the Preface, " have not spent their lives in the State, but have sought their fortunes in other regions."

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12. — *On the Remote Cause of Epidemic Diseases*. By JOHN PARKIN, Honorary and Corresponding Fellow of the Royal Academies of Medicine and Surgery in Madrid, Barcelona, and Cadiz ; Fellow of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London ; Graduate in Medicine of the University of Erlangen. London : 1841. 8vo. pp. 198.

THE cause of disease is involved in much obscurity, even in the simplest form in which the question can be presented ; and when we extend our view to epidemic diseases, which sometimes spread over and devastate vast regions of the globe, it is buried in mystery. This cause must be powerful, for its effects are irresistible ; it must be extensive, for its influence is felt in every part of the earth ; it must exist independently of local and temporary agencies, for it spreads its action over every variety of climate and through all vicissitudes of season. It has been sought for in the atmosphere, because that is the only known agent upon the surface of the globe, universal enough to meet all the points of its action. But, if it exist there, it has never been detected by direct inquiry. The most searching investigations of French chemistry could discover no difference in the composition of the purest air from the peak of Teneriffe, and the pestilential atmosphere of a Parisian hospital. He must be a bold man, therefore, who shall propose a theory to meet all the claims of these numerous and diversified phenomena, or an ingenious and able man, who shall from the phenomena themselves, and their affinities, discover the law that regulates them. To which of these classes

the author of this inquiry is to be assigned, our readers must judge.

The first thing to be done towards establishing a new theory is of course to demolish all preëxisting theories. This, in the present instance, is a task of no great difficulty. Mr. Parkin directs his attention chiefly to the "black death" of the fourteenth century, and the epidemic cholera of the present age, and regards them in some sort as exemplars, or representatives, of the whole class of epidemic diseases. He shows that the phenomena attending the spread of these diseases cannot be explained by the supposition of contagion, or of malaria, or marsh effluvia; nor, in short, by any influence disseminated in the atmosphere, since the progress of disease from place to place has often been in direct opposition to the course of the wind, in climates where that course has been uniformly the same for a considerable time.

He looks elsewhere, therefore, for an agent sufficiently powerful and extensive for the exigencies of the case; and he finds it beneath the earth's surface, — or *crust*, as Geologists more elegantly term it, — in *volcanic action*. There does not appear much of originality in the mere statement of this theory; but there is more in the author's developement of it, and still more in his elucidation and defence of it. Our learned countryman, Mr. Noah Webster, many years ago, published, in two goodly-sized volumes, the history of Epidemics, and their dependence upon, or connexion with, comets, earthquakes, and volcanos. Mr. Parkin, however, does not rely upon any coincidence in the times of their appearance, as evidence of a connexion in their origin, for he does not think these coincidences sufficiently constant to prove such connexion.

"As the shock of the earthquake, and the eruption of the volcano, are the principal signs we have of this action being in existence, the only direct evidence, it may be considered, that could be adduced in support of the above hypothesis, would be the occurrence of those phenomena simultaneously with the outbreak of epidemic diseases. Such proof, however, is generally wanting; for although, as will hereafter appear, epidemics are sometimes accompanied by earthquakes, these diseases frequently prevail without being preceded or accompanied by these phenomena, — while the influence of volcanos must be too limited to allow us to draw any deductions from this source, in respect to general plagues or epidemics." — p. 35.

The author mentions five principal laws of volcanic action, with which those of epidemics thus coincide; *the action is felt or witnessed along particular lines of the earth's surface; the regularity of their progress both chronologically and geographically; its effects are less on secondary, than on tertiary strata, and seldom witnessed on primary formations; the effects are*

*always greater nearer the sea or other collection of waters ; and, lastly, their limited duration, their periodical return, and their total cessation in that particular locality after certain definite periods.*

It must be borne in mind, that, by volcanic action, is not meant, merely, the ebullition and spouting of fire of an actual volcano in full blast, but, as we have seen above, a certain power pervading the whole interior of the globe, which our author does not very clearly define, and of which, perhaps, even his own conceptions are not quite distinct. The idea is sufficiently familiar to geologists of a great mass of internal fire, pervading the bowels of the earth, an immense boiling cauldron, whose agitations shake whole continents in earthquakes, and whose outbreaks are the outpourings of volcanos. But we believe the supposition is original with our author, that there are other and more quiet means of communication from the hidden world within, mephitic vapors silently and invisibly escaping through fissures and fountains to poison our upper air, and steal away our health. He finds a confirmation of the correctness of this view of the cause of epidemic disease, in the connexion of this same volcanic action with the more visible atmospheric phenomena. He quarrels not, indeed, with the meteorologist in regard to the ordinary production of rain. But certain "aberrations of rain," as well as "irregularities of the seasons," "snow and hail," and "storms and hurricanes," he finds, obey the same laws, as those which regulate the movements of epidemic and of volcanic action ; and therefore he infers, that there is between them all the relationship of common origin, at least, if not of cause and effect.

We have next a chapter giving a concise history of the Black Death, and of the Cholera, showing how the progress of each was attended by various remarkable atmospheric and subterranean phenomena ; and then what may be called the rationale of the whole theory, an explanation of the manner in which the volcanic action is itself excited, and in which it may be supposed to produce disease. The history is interesting ; but it would not be difficult to find coincidences enough of this sort, at any period of the world ; and it does not, therefore, to our minds, bring much additional evidence to the truth of the theory. In fact, we are not sure that we are quite convinced by the whole statement of the argument. Some objections occur to our minds, that we would fain see removed. But we have no space to offer them now ; and, if it were otherwise, we have little inclination to do battle with a man who states his case so fairly, and who argues it with so earnest an enthusiasm.

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